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ABSTRACT

A report of a cooperative project involving a university instructional development center and a history department discusses the process of working with students in course redesign, analyzes the advantages and disadvantages of this kind of student involvement, and concludes with recommendations for future projects. The purpose of the project is to redesign an introductory American history course so that students might pursue particular interest areas, have close and frequent contact with faculty members, and engage in a variety of learning modes tailored to their needs and learning styles. An unusual aspect of the project is that it draws on the insights and experiences of 13 honor students in the course who are, as their major activity for the course, involved in all aspects of its redesign. Background on the development center and on the use of students in the development process is presented, followed by a discussion of problems encountered and their possible solutions, accomplishments, and evaluation of the project, and conclusions. Appendixes contain the results, the open-ended responses, and notes on the predevelopment opinionnaire. (Author/KSM)

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Robert M. Diamond

STUDENT INVOLVEMENT IN COURSE REDESIGN

(A Pilot Project in American History)

Penny Richardson , Abi Schatz
with Thomas R. Owen

REPORT 1

August 1973

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PREFACE

The Center for Instructional Development at Syracuse University has been established to work with faculty and students in the redesign of the academic program. Emphasis is placed on generating courses and curriculums that will meet the needs, interests, and abilities of the individual student by using existing resources. As a result, academic programs that are unique in both design and content are evolving. In addition the Center is providing, for a limited number of advanced doctoral candidates, an opportunity to gain direct experience in both development and evaluation.

While the procedures followed by the Center are consistent and apparently effective, much has yet to be learned about the developmental process. The project described in this report was an attempt to utilize, for the first time, undergraduate students as the content team in the redesign of a course while at the same time assigning full development responsibilities to two of the Center's more experienced development interns. It should be noted, however, that this project, unlike most Center projects, involved only a single faculty member. This built-in constraint did limit the long-range potential of the course design that was generated.

The results of this project are having a direct effect on how the Center involves students in projects and, at the same time, are providing insight into the training of future development staff.

Robert M. Diamond
Assistant Vice Chancellor

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

This project was a cooperative effort between Dr. Robert Diamond of the Center for Instructional Development and Dr. Roger Sharp of the History Department of Syracuse University. The purpose of the project was to redesign an introductory American History course so that students could pursue particular interest areas, have close and frequent contact with faculty members, and engage in a variety of learning modes tailored to their needs and learning styles.

Although the above aims are a part of all the projects undertaken by the Center for Instructional Development, this project was unusual in that it drew on the insights and experiences of thirteen students in the Honors section of the course, who were, as their major activity for the course, involved in all aspects of its redesign. This report will discuss the process of working with students in course redesign, analyze the advantages and disadvantages of this kind of student involvement, and conclude with recommendations for future projects.

I. BACKGROUND ON THE CENTER FOR INSTRUCTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Development Process

Diagram 1 shows the systematic procedure used in course development at the Center for Instructional Development at Syracuse University. Each box shows a decision that must be made and the information required for this decision-making process. The procedure, then, consists of gathering information, setting objectives, considering alternatives, making decisions, trying them out, and revising them based on new information.

Development Roles

There are three roles played in each development project: content specialist, developer, and evaluator.

The content specialist is usually the faculty member responsible for the course. He makes the final decisions dealing with course goals, objectives and content. He must also organize content and decide on learning activities.

The developer facilitates and directs the development process, insuring that the content specialist is making decisions systematically and with a proper information base. He is both a helper and a devil's advocate, questioning every decision and assumption so that mistakes will be at a minimum. He also makes developmental decisions in such areas as time frames for the development project, utilization of media, and costs. Another of the developer's functions is to organize and communicate with all the other people involved in the project. He is, in effect, an orchestrator--suggesting, organizing, trouble-shooting, politicking--doing everything possible to help the program succeed.

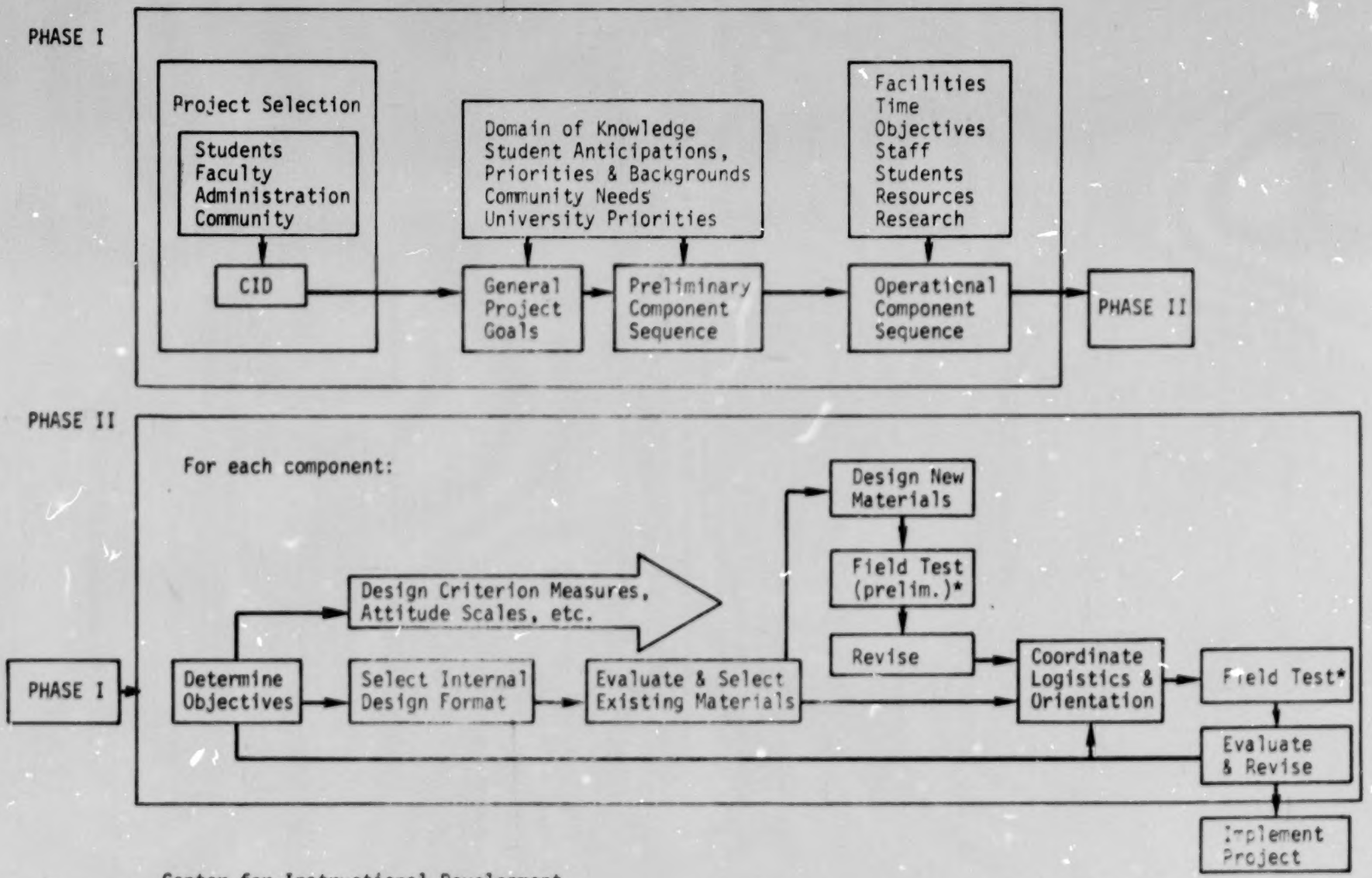
The evaluator has two basic functions: first, providing data for better decision making and, second, providing essential data on the success or failure

of the course or program. He designs instruments and procedures that will provide both the development data and the information necessary for the evaluation of the course and its components. He plays devil's advocate to both the content specialist and the developer--always questioning their assumptions. He helps to answer such questions as the following: What are the students' entering skills/knowledge level? What are entering attitudes and expectations for the course? Did this particular instructional component (once developed) achieve its objective? It is also his function to point out problems, define decisions not yet made or perhaps even anticipated, and to help in decision-making.

These roles are not mutually exclusive. All three people share in making decisions. Each must be aware of what the others are doing and of their feeling, worries, and doubts. They must work as a team.

PROCESS FOR INSTRUCTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Diagram 1



Center for Instructional Development
Syracuse University
R.M. Diamond 3/29/72

* Both Instructional Techniques
& Evaluation Instruments

II. USING STUDENTS IN THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The Course Before Redesign

History 255, taught to approximately 400 freshmen and sophomores each year, is a one-semester introductory course in American History, covering Puritanism, the American Revolution, and the Civil War. It follows a traditional format of college courses with two large-group lectures per week and one small-group discussion section led by seventeen graduate assistants in history. The assignments for the course consist of two short papers, a midterm examination, and a final. Required readings and course content are uniform for all students.

The Decision to Involve Students in Course Redesign

Dr. Sharp, the faculty member in charge of the course, was interested in working with the Center for Instructional Development for two reasons. First, he was not happy with the existing design of the history course because he felt that it offered too little flexibility for students of widely varying backgrounds. Second, he felt that the Honors discussion group already had a good background in history and might be more challenged by going into depth in a specific interest area. He asked the Center for Instructional Development to help the students and himself in developing some sort of multi-media presentation in a particular area of history as a semester project.

Dr. Diamond, Director of the Center for Instructional Development, was intrigued with the idea of involving students in course development but suggested a broader and deeper kind of participation. He wondered what students would come up with if given the chance to design their "ideal course," without the usual constraint of fixed-meeting-time, lockstep assignments, and uniform content offerings. He also wondered what would happen if the project were headed by graduate interns in development, who

thus far had had supplementary roles in major projects with opportunity to observe the development process but without the experience of actually being in charge of a project.

He suggested to Dr. Sharp that the Center for Instructional Development, working closely with him, assume the complete redesign of History 255 according to the usual CID process--with three important exceptions:

--the role of "content specialist" would be filled by the group of Honors history students, with Dr. Sharp as advisor

--the role of "instructional developer" would be filled by two graduate interns in development, with Dr. Diamond as advisor

--the role of "evaluator" would be filled by an intern in evaluation, with Dr. Edward Kelly, the evaluation specialist, as advisor.

Rationale for Involving Students

The project has three purposes. First, Center staff members saw the project as exploratory and open-ended. They wanted to see what would happen when students were given a key role in decision-making. What problems would be involved? Would student ideas offer new insights into course development? Would their suggestions prove feasible? Could students handle this much responsibility, and could a group of this size work together effectively? It was hoped that the project could help answer these and other questions so that the Center could learn how to involve students in course redesign in the most productive way possible.

The second purpose of the project was to give participating students a challenging experience in learning history. It was reasoned that in making decisions about what others should learn, the students would themselves be compelled to broaden and deepen their own understanding of history. They would need to become "experts" in order to make wise choices. They would

have the opportunity to specialize in an area of particular interest to themselves as well.

The third purpose of the project was to produce a redesigned History 255 course, one that would provide more student-faculty contact, better and more flexible use of both student and instructor time, and opportunity for meeting individual interests and needs.

The Organizational Plan

Diagram 2 shows the usual interactions involved in a Center for Instructional Development project. The History Redesign Project, however, has a much more complex organizational plan, as Diagram 3 shows. More interactions were required as well as greater coordination of people, times, and places. These factors affected the outcomes of the project, as the "Problems Encountered" section will show.

Diagram 2

BASIC PERSONNEL IN "TYPICAL" PROJECT

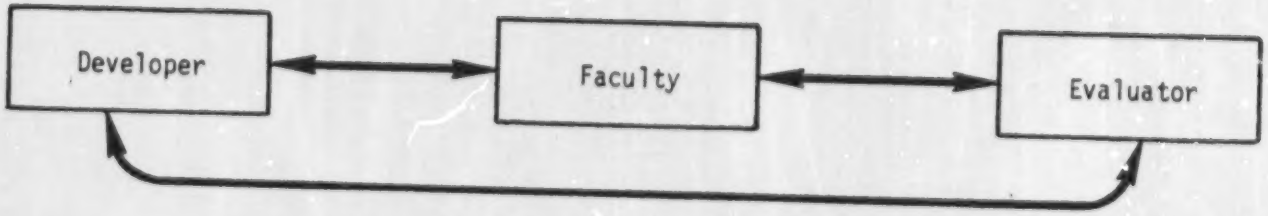
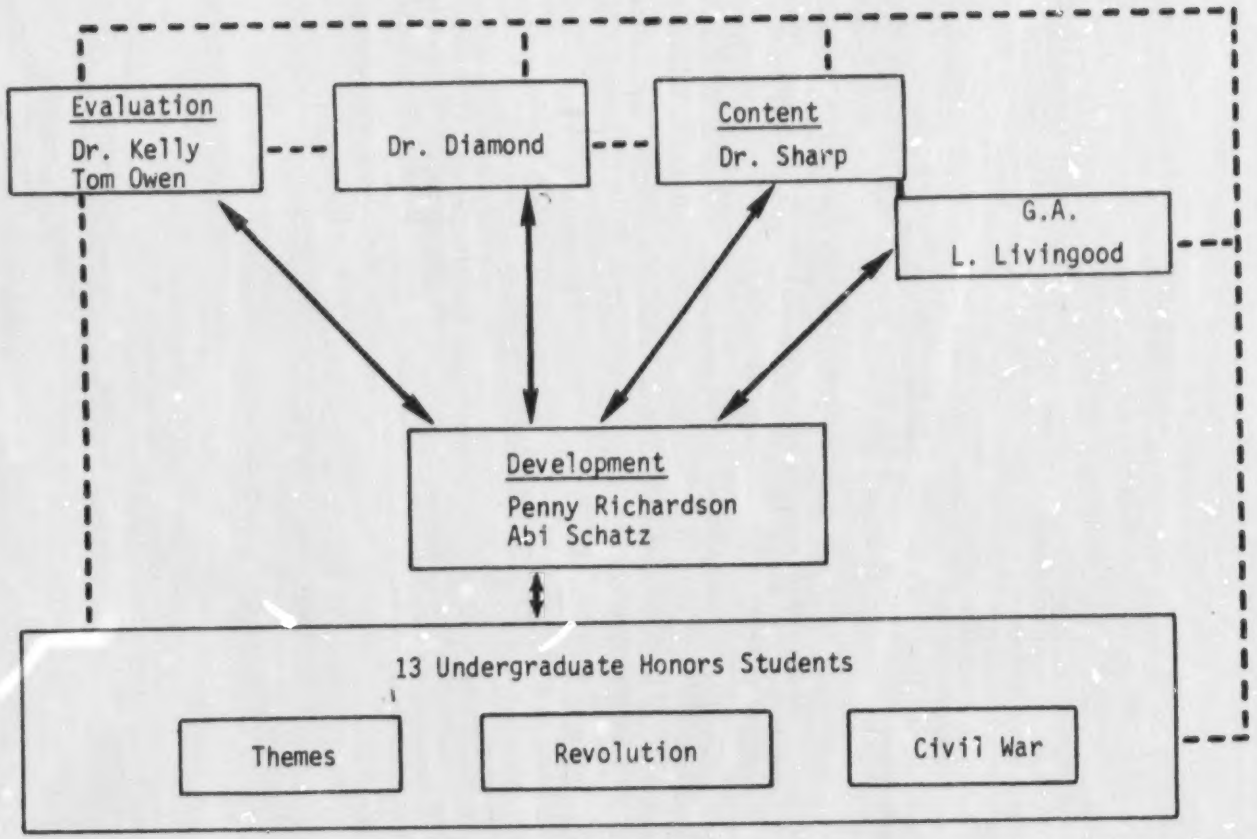


Diagram 3

HISTORY 255 REDESIGN PERSONNEL



Establishing Course Goals

The first step was to establish goals for the course. They were derived from three sources: Dr. Sharp's ideas and philosophy, the ideas and philosophies of the thirteen Honors students, and data gathered by questionnaire from 250 of the 400 students then enrolled in the History 255 course.

At an initial meeting with students and developers, Dr. Sharp stated four broad goals of the course: students should gain the historiographical skills of the historian; they should learn to think like historians; they should gain the sense of history as a nation's memory; and they should find joy in the study of history.

The thirteen Honors students each had a distinctive point of view as to what a history course should be. Several argued that each student should have complete responsibility for choosing readings, assignments, and grades. They stated that history, like all courses, should be a process of self-discovery and, unless students are given the chance to make decisions for themselves, they will not grow as individuals. On the other hand, one student insisted that only the professor was truly qualified to make such decisions and that the lecture format was the most efficient form for transmitting his knowledge. The remaining students fell somewhere between these two extremes. Their various viewpoints on the purpose of studying history included the following: to understand today better; to understand what the "greats" of history did wrong; to experience the intrinsic pleasure of studying a deeply fascinating body of subject matter; to acquire a critical attitude towards history; to realize that primary sources were written by biased human beings who perceived selectively; to develop greater interest in the world; to gain insight into the "paranoid styles of American politics."

The next step was to design an opinionnaire to provide specific data on the 400 students enrolled in the course. The evaluation intern, Tom Owen, the development interns, five of the history students, and Dr. Sharp developed a series of questions to establish backgrounds of students in the course as well as their particular content interest areas, likes and dislikes, and goals in taking the course. (See Appendix A for opinionnaire and results.)

Responses from the 250 students who filled out this opinionnaire revealed that students wanted to study some topics in depth but did not want to lose sight of "the big picture" of the course. High interest was expressed in the American Revolution, the rise of slavery culminating in the Civil War, the westward expansion, the American Indian, and the roots of American radicalism. (See Table 1, Appendix A, for areas of major interest to students.)

Sixty randomly-selected responses to the open-ended questions on the opinionnaire provided some additional insights. When asked "What are some of the most important things you expect to learn in this course?" the majority wanted to understand the relationship between past events and beliefs and our present-day history, to have an overview of history which would include a "moderate striking on all aspects," and to understand the causes of historical events. Other concerns were with minority groups, the growth of democratic institutions, and the "human side" of history. (See Appendix B, page 38, for specific responses.)

When asked "What would 'turn you off' in a history course?" students rejected the factual, chronological approach, emphasis on memorization, and boring lectures by an uninterested professor. They wished to get away from the "high school" overview method of teaching American History. Most students

preferred seminars or a combination of all kinds of learning activities: seminars, lectures, minicourses, independent study, guest speakers, and research. They wanted choice and a variety of approaches. (See page 39 for specific responses.)

The task of the groups was to build a course that would incorporate or utilize the best of all the above positions, that would achieve the broad goals of Dr. Sharp, and that would meet the needs and interest of students as stated in the student opinionnaire. The task of the two interns in development, who headed the group, was to coordinate efforts of individuals, so that the various ideas and concerns could emerge as a viable history program. The time line for the project was set at one semester.

III. PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED AND SOME POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

In order to illustrate some of the considerations involved in working with students, we have chosen a few incidents that exemplify problems encountered: problems of role definition, information-gathering, communicating, interacting with groups, organizing time and people, and evaluating. In each case, we have suggested possible solutions.

Instance:

The first few large group meetings generally floundered--Pandora's box had been opened. Students had been told to throw out all constraints of time, place, and content and to design the "ideal course." Each student--bright, articulate, competitive--had his own opinion about what this "ideal" consisted of. So did the faculty member--who would have to live with final decisions about the course. This period was the most frustrating for the students.

Problems:

1. The faculty member hesitated to impose his will on the group and, as a result, did not give specific direction to what content should be emphasized. The students were unsure just how much authority they had and had great difficulty in achieving consensus on any decisions.
2. Most students were freshmen and had only high school experience as models for what the history course might be like.
3. This initial goal-setting period is frustrating in most development projects. With so many possibilities, it's always difficult to decide what not to include. In this particular case, the difficulty was aggravated by the students' lack of content expertise and by the difficulty in finding grounds for compromise.

Alternatives:

1. Since efficient decision making is impossible in a group this large, diverse, and contentious, the initial decision-making authority might be delegated to a group of six or fewer.
2. Come in with broad goals and a general course overview which the students can react to, revise, and improve on. Starting from scratch is time-consuming, and students lack the requisite content background to make such decisions.
3. Time might well have been spent on an initial consideration of the roles people play in groups, the difficulty of group decision-making, and the need for compromise.
4. Define the decision-making process more clearly, so that students understand the limits of their authority and the constraints within which they must work.

Instance:

The students, like us, wanted to know more about the student body taking the course. The initial opinionnaire answered some questions and raised others. Some of the student designers were still unsure about the needs and interests of the class, and though they were uncertain about what to look for, they felt they hadn't found it.

Problems:

1. Since the opinionnaires were anonymous, we had no way to follow up particularly interesting responses.
2. Some questions were worded ambiguously, as were some responses.
3. The opinionnaire was administered during a lecture session on a lovely, sunny day, and only 250 of the 400 students enrolled were present to fill it out.

Alternatives:

1. While some of the students worked on developing and administering the opinionnaire, others could have carried on additional forms of pre-development information-gathering, such as interviewing small groups of students in the course, getting suggestions from other history faculty members, and surveying students who had taken the course previous semesters. The problem of how to interpret the data would still exist, but the information-gathering would have been a more comprehensive effort.
2. Some students could have researched other experimental programs, course outlines emphasizing various aspects of and approaches to history, statements from experts as to relative advantages of one method of presentation over another, and critical and provocative points of view on schooling such as those of Neil Postman and Edgar Friedenburg.
3. Some method of sampling opinions of those not represented in the survey should have been designed.

Instance:

After several weeks it became clear that when the development interns used terms such as "remedial units," "programmed instruction," and "independent learning," the history students were either baffled or mistaken about what the words meant. It was also clear that the development process in chart form seemed too impersonal. We wanted the students to see the "little boxes" as steps in the decision-making process.

Problems:

1. We did not all share a common frame of reference. Development jargon tended to obscure communication. Everyone assumed that everyone else

knew what those terms meant, and no one wanted to be the one to ask for an explanation.

2. To some students, the systems approach seemed non- or anti-humanistic, while to the developers it seemed a sensible, systematic procedure.

Alternatives:

1. A very carefully designed introduction to instructional development was needed to be sure that everyone who was involved understood the development process and its terminology. Students should be "talked through" the steps in the development flow chart in order to see them as decision points and information inputs. Jargon should be kept to a minimum.
2. During a tour of the Independent Learning Laboratory, which should be held early in the semester, students could examine the programed materials, view a slide-tape presentation, play a simulation game, and thus see possibilities for kinds of learning activities they might develop.

Instance:

Late in the semester, students broke up into three content groups (American Themes, American Revolution, Civil War), and the development interns met with each group once a week. These meetings tended to be progress reports on their reading rather than sessions where decisions were made and action was taken. Progress in producing a course outline was slow, yet the students had few questions and seemed to feel they were progressing.

Problems:

1. The students were attempting to become "content experts" but were having to make decisions as if they were already experts.
2. They were really not sure what was expected of them. The students that

seemed the most directed were the American Themes group in which each student had selected a specific topic for a minicourse. Others were fumbling for purpose.

Alternatives:

1. We should have come up with the "Preliminary Outline" much sooner, even at the risk of leaving students out of this part of the decision-making process. With that developed, each student could then see where his particular task fit in with the whole project. Time spent having students develop a "Preliminary Outline" on their own may have been beneficial to them individually as self-instruction, but for developing the course, it was time wasted.
2. Small group meetings should have been structured so that the groups would meet every other week on their own, with a specific task to accomplish. It was too easy for the groups to rely on the developers to take the next step.

Instance:

After the small content groups had been working on their own topics and had developed them in some depth, a large group meeting was held to develop an overall outline for the sequence of content. The meeting was long, loud, and strife-ridden. Everyone had convictions on the "best" way to put the pieces together, and no consensus emerged.

Problem:

It is impossible for a large group of people to create one design.

Alternative:

At a second meeting, a proposed sequence of content for the course

(a "preliminary component outline," to use development jargon) was presented to the group by one of the developers. The group made criticisms and suggested modifications but basically accepted it as proposed. The point here is that a complicated organizational task such as construction of a course outline will be done better by a task force than by a large group. The large group can then react, criticize, suggest, or refect, but a great deal of time and energy will be saved.

Instance:

During the evaluation interviews we held at the end of the semester, students expressed pleasure at having been involved in a challenging and demanding task, but questioned whether the role of content specialist had been the most appropriate one. They suggested several alternative roles better suited to students.

Alternatives:

1. Besides making up the initial questionnaire, the thirteen students could have conducted informal interviews with students taking the course to get their suggestions and complaints. This could have been announced to the large group so that they would know whom to contact. Thus the students would serve as a medium for feedback about the course throughout the semester.
2. Students interested in experimental education could research experiments in teaching history in other colleges to gather together a smorgasbord of possibilities for the decision makers.
3. Students could interview other history faculty members to get their ideas on what's important in history. This would get the rest of the

department involved in and informed about the project, which is politically useful, and could add valuable input to the project as well.

4. After opting for specific interest areas within the general course outline, students could do research and gather materials related to particular topics. This happened where students were developing minicourses; for example, one girl located many valuable primary sources on her topic—American Utopias in Central New York.
5. Students could design specific materials for the Independent Learning Lab, for minicourses, or for large-group presentations. This would involve both research and production, using the Center for Instructional Development staff as resource people.

IV. WHAT WAS ACCOMPLISHED

By the end of the semester, the students had come up with the preliminary component outline sequence, as shown in Diagram 4. The American Revolution section of the course had been further outlined and broken down into parts, as shown in Diagram 5. Individual students had developed minicourse outlines and resources in the following areas: Nineteenth Century Utopias, Westward Expansion, The American Indian, Battles of the Revolution, and the Psyche of the Old South. All students had done work in their independent research areas, and all had done much thinking about the problem of course redesign.

Proposed Outline
History 255
Draft 2-12.15.71

Diagram 4

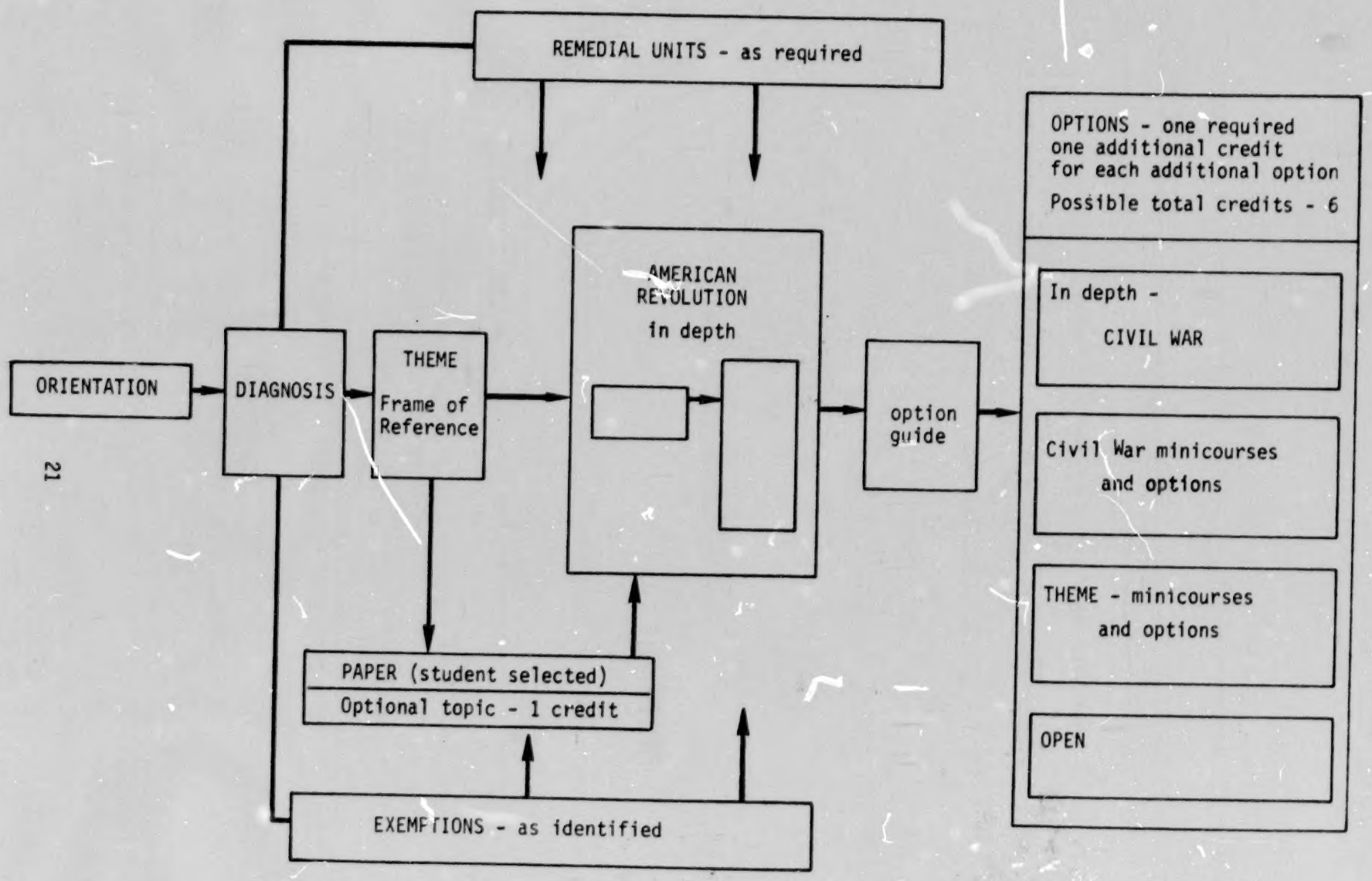
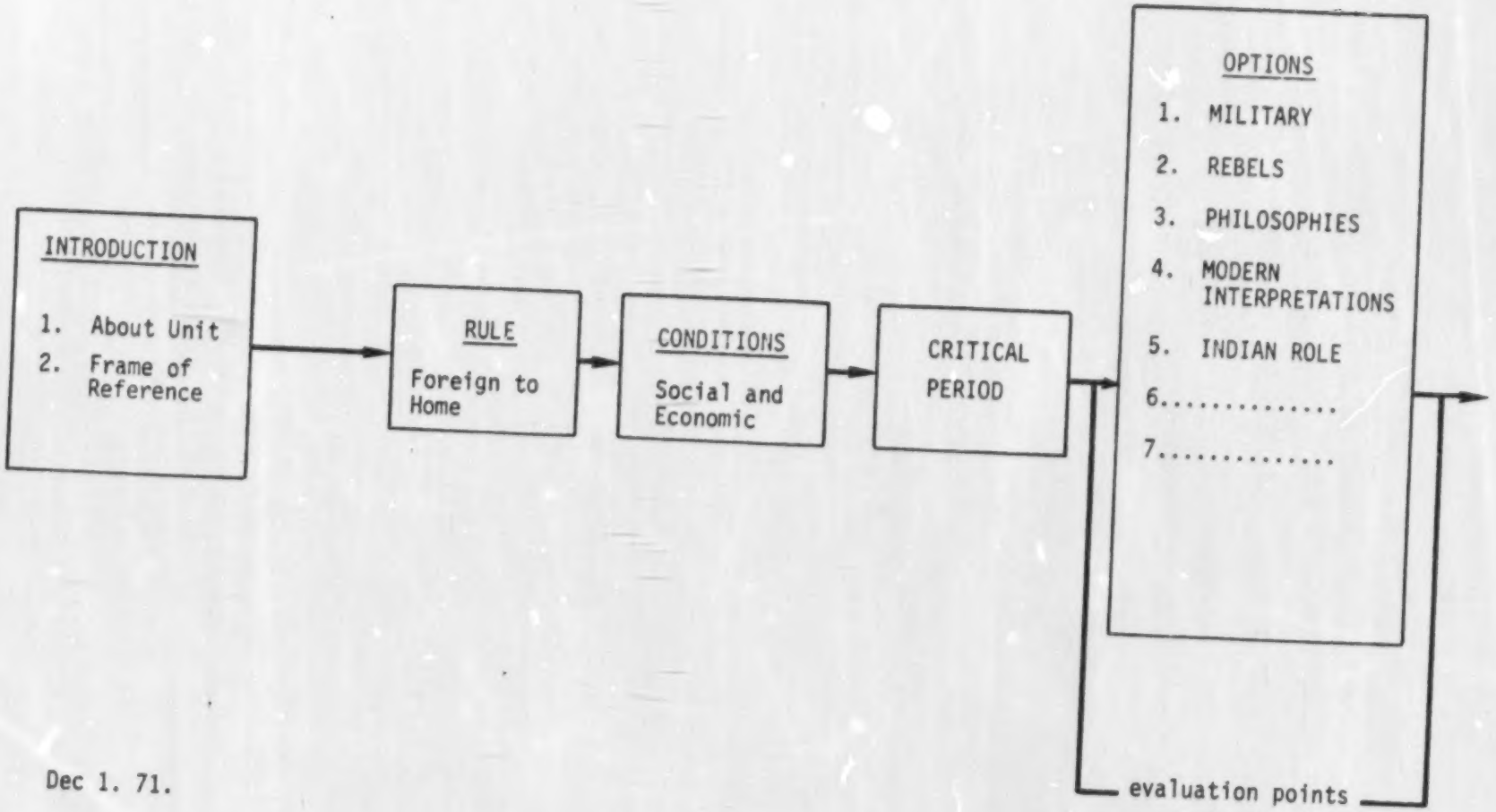


Diagram 5

HISTORY 255 REDESIGN--REVOLUTION SECTION



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V. EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

Since a major goal of the project was to discover what students could offer or gain from the experience of instructional development, we spent a great deal of time gathering the reactions of the honors students. The two intern developers held taped interviews with them in groups of four or five at the end of the semester. Each student also wrote a paper for Dr. Sharp, in which he described his growth in understanding history and his assessment of his experience as a course designer. Dr. Sharp was interviewed as well.

We found that in the group interviews, one or two strong personalities determined the tone of the discussion, making it hard to get a clear reading on individual opinions. The papers written for the instructor were a better indication of what each student felt he had learned and what his problems had been.

All of the students were very positive about some aspects of the experience. They felt that studying history in order to make decisions about what others should learn had made them see history in a new way. Most felt they had pursued a special interest area of their own in some depth. All felt they had new insight into the difficulties of designing a course and would have more tolerance for their professors in the future. They felt they had learned much about group work and the necessity for compromise and sensitivity.

The students were disappointed that the project had moved so slowly and that they had no final product to show for their efforts. Most felt that an expert in history could have come up with the course outline in three

weeks, where it took them a semester to accomplish that. Some wished they had entered the project at a later date after major decisions about course structure and content had been made. Others, in spite of the frustrations, were glad they had participated from the start. All agreed they had had problems in defining tasks for themselves. Some minded this greatly, while others felt their greatest learning had been due to the self-discipline required. All felt the experience had been frustrating but enjoyable. All but one or two stated strongly they would participate again in such a project, if given the chance, but that they would go about it much differently. (Needless to say, there was little agreement about what the ideal "next time" would look like.)

Dr. Sharp felt that the project was a valuable learning experience for the students involved, but that it was inefficient in its use of time. Some of the students required a good deal of his time, because they lacked a clear understanding of their roles and because they lacked an adequate background in history. He felt the students had come up with a viable design but that there would have to be much more training of graduate assistants in history before the course as designed would be feasible. In the estimation of Dr. Sharp, the final papers which showed what the students had done demonstrated hard work, serious thinking about history, and new insights into the difficulties of course development. Dr. Sharp himself believed that he had gained much insight into how students look at history and how they approach the study of it.

Quotes from Student Papers Evaluating the History Project

"In evaluating the history course, I would have to say that it was by far one of the most rewarding educational experiences of my life. I feel that I gained knowledge in this course that I might never have gotten otherwise. I had set out to acquire as much working knowledge of the American West as I possibly could in the available time, and I have done most of it with very little outside supervision. I have worked to plan a meaningful course of study with regard to the limits of time and space, and have become more aware of the challenges and difficulties of planning a meaningful educational experience...Now that it is all coming to a close, I think that I have been given in this program an opportunity to participate in a unique educational experience, one indeed that has been a tremendous credit to all who were involved."

"Even though the project had its faults, I am convinced that the experience was valuable for me, not only because of what I learned about history, but in other ways as well. For me, it was the first opportunity I had had to do independent study. I had to learn to budget my time, to allot the right amount of time to research, other courses, and my social life, and to do all this without outside direction. I also learned about working with other people, as when I worked on the questionnaire. Everybody had his own ideas not only about the general format of the questionnaire but even about the wording of specific questions. We all had to learn to compromise and to listen to one another's views if we wanted to accomplish something I also, of course, had a lot of fun in the process."

"I feel that the biggest mistake was not having our role in this project clearly defined from the beginning. I never knew what was expected of me, and because of this, I felt little incentive at the time. My participation was minimal although, as my attendance at meetings shows, I was very interested in the project."

"Working with the Center for Instructional Development to help restructure the freshman history course has been an entirely new learning experience for me. Not only did I study and attain much knowledge in an interesting area of history, but I learned a great deal about people. I learned from witnessing as well as experiencing frustration and achievement.

I believe that the abundance of freedom in this loosely-structured course was extremely helpful in promoting highly specialized independent work. However, I believe that there was one major drawback. The beginning of the course should have been structured a little more tightly: we probably should have broken down into small groups sooner to begin our work of narrowing down specific topics of interest."

"I have been greatly enlightened about the frustration that a professor must feel every time he plans a course. Even when he is satisfied with the objectives, content, and materials for the course, he still has to face the judgments of several hundred students. It reminds me of Ibsen's <u>An Enemy of the People</u>. *The conflict is between a doctor who has expert knowledge to offer the townspeople for a humane purpose and the townspeople who only want to know what they can use for selfish purposes. A professor's obligation should be to truth as well as to the student. It isn't lack of self-confidence that makes me say that I sincerely hope university educators will give me more than what I ask for."*

"While working with the group, I became acutely aware of the complex task of producing change in any system, in this case, that of education. It was necessary to become sensitive to the dynamics of the educational process, to become acquainted with the limitations of faculty, finances, and time. The biggest problem for me was the time element. Just as I began to feel a greater sense of direction and as the larger group began to establish a proposed outline for the course, the semester was almost at an end. But I am very pleased with what we produced in the slavery section even though it was an unfinished job. Slavery and the Civil War had always been the most fascinating part of American history for me; and, for the first time, I was able to attack it in detail without forgetting why I was studying it."

VI. CONCLUSIONS

In assessing the total project, we developers felt we had learned a great deal not only about the valuable role students might play in course development, but also about the trouble spots the developer must watch for and about the structure and guidance he must provide. Some of our conclusions seem rather obvious to us now, and we wonder why they were not apparent from the beginning. Hindsight is the great clarifier. We feel that many of our conclusions apply to any course development project, not merely to those involving students.

It became evident early that there was need for better communication among the participants in the project. They needed to understand one another's intentions, expectations, questions, and concerns throughout the program. To some extent, this problem of mutual understanding was due to the initial reluctance of people to express themselves frankly: they needed some time to build up their self-confidence. Nevertheless, the developer is obligated to set up channels of communication immediately and to check constantly for whatever confusion, disagreements, and misapprehensions might arise.

Another important lesson was the need to set up realistic constraints and clear role definitions at the outset. Telling thriteen bright, strong-minded, competitive Honors students that complete course redesign was their charge almost insured that each of them would take it as his personal mission to right all the evils of education. Naturally, each student had his own "perfect system" in mind and was unwilling to concede many points to his fellows.

One step that might have facilitated communication at the beginning would have been a session in which all would make explicit their assumptions about the students for whom they were designing, about the purpose of history, about the necessary processes, about the use to which knowledge of history would be put, about what this course was supposed to prepare students for (other courses, jobs, general knowledge), even about what college itself was for. By looking at these assumptions together, we would perhaps have eliminated the need for each person to define his "truth" regarding each of these areas.

These comments all indicate that an instructional developer must be highly skilled in working with groups. He needs to realize that besides achieving the "group task," each individual has a "private goal" of his own: earning recognition from his peers, achieving self-esteem, expressing or defining his own ideas. Until the private goals are successfully accomplished, the group task will suffer. The developer needs to be aware of the roles a good leader plays, and to fill these roles himself if necessary. He needs to be aware that a solution to the group task is more difficult if the criterion for completion is ambiguous and if group consensus is required. He should be aware that cooperation rather than competition generally promotes more individual communication, friendliness, and group productivity. Mild stress appears to produce optimal performance, whereas if there is no stress at all, often there is no performance either. And the incentive to perform is greater when the task has a high degree of "reality." Groups who get positive feedback about their success raise the level of their aspirations, while groups with unsuccessful feedback lower it.

The considerable amount of time it took to work with so large a group was one of our major problems. It required a great deal of time to get people to communicate with one another, to gather information about the target population, and to think through and to discuss goals and their implications. All of these time-consuming activities were beneficial to the Honors students themselves as part of their education, but considering that the Center for Instructional Development is task- and product-oriented, the lengthiness of the history project makes its timetable unfeasible for many other projects.

To sum up, then, our conclusions are the following:

1. Using students in course redesign allows the student to deal with aspects of the subject matter which he is unlikely to meet in a regular course.
2. Student input is valuable and often essential.
3. If students are to be directly involved in the redesign, then they must be carefully chosen with a sound rationale for the choice.
4. It will take longer to develop a course using students as active participants.
5. If students are used, they must be carefully guided so that they know what is expected of them at each stage.
6. The students must be helped to become effective as an informal group so they can discuss, disagree, express their feelings, compromise, and decide without being overly defensive.
7. This project was an effective learning experience for the students.

8. Time and tasks have to be carefully organized for maximum efficiency.
9. The experience of administering such a project is excellent training for an intern in instructional development.

APPENDIX A

HISTORY 255

Predevelopment Results

Preface

This packet is the result of trying to assess the needs, interests, and preferences of students in order to improve the quality of instruction in History 255. Much of the information and analysis is value laden and may sometimes be interpreted in terms of how it is similar to, or different from, one's own values in that area. The evaluator intends the findings of this study not as a mandate for particular actions, but rather as a guide for creative course revision.

The following people were of considerable assistance in producing the study:

Brad Boyd
Linda Celauro
Audry Cesner
Abi Schatz
Kathy Schoonmaker
Ellis Simon
Penny Richardson

November 10, 1971
Thomas R. Owen
Evaluator

AMERICAN HISTORY TO 1865

HISTORY 255

Predevelopment Opinionnaire

In cooperation with the Center for Instructional Development, the History Department is studying the introductory American History course (History 255) to see in what ways it can best meet your needs and interests. As a first step in that process, the following questions have been designed to help determine your background, interests, and general expectations. Please be candid with your answers and suggestions.

RECORD ALL ANSWERS IN PENCIL ONLY.

I. In the area labeled ADDITIONAL CODED DATA enter the following information if available.

Column

1. What is your college class status?

0 = Freshman	49%
1 = Sophomore	39%
2 = Junior	7%
3 = Senior	3%

2. College or school?

0 = Architecture	1%	5 = Forestry	9%
1 = Art	1%	6 = Human Development	0
2 = Business Administration	5%	7 = Communications	8%
3 = Education	2%	8 = Liberal Arts	62%
4 = Engineering	1%	9 = Other	3%

3. If you are in Liberal Arts, what is your major?

0 = English	4 = Math	unreliable data
1 = Foreign Languages	5 = Sciences	
2 = History	6 = Social Sciences	
3 = Humanities		

4. What was your primary reason for taking this course?

0 = to satisfy a requirement	28%
1 = interested in U. S. History	55%
2 = needed a course to fill schedule	8%

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Am Hist Pre-dev. instrument

II. Answer the remaining questions on the answer sheet proper.

I find history to be A = extremely, B = moderately, C = slightly, D = not at all

	extremely	moderately	slightly	not at all	(percentages
1. Interesting	45	45	6	1	
2. Difficult	6	39	41	9	
3. Useful	23	49	19	4	
4. A Waste	3	4	16	68	

5. How would you prefer the material in History 255 to be covered?

   a) a few topics in depth 46%
   b) many topics moderate depth 38%
   c) general survey 14%

6. How would you prefer topics to be selected in a course?

   a) topics selected by professor based on his professional understanding of the field 40%
   b) topics selected by vote of the class from list compiled by professor 59%

III. Which approaches have been part of your previous history courses?

Answer A = yes B = no

7. examination of original documents yes - 50% no - 49%

8. comparison of conflicting viewpoints of historians on a particular issue yes - 52% no - 46%

9. consideration of history as the memory or the "social conscience" of a nation yes - 46% no - 51%

10. study of present issues in the light of past influences (for example, modern censorship as an outgrowth of Puritanism, or modern violence as an outgrowth of the "frontier ethic," etc.) yes - 47% no - 51%

11. factual chronological approach yes - 87% no - 10%

12. Which of the following course structures would you prefer for History 255?

    a) lecture with discussion section 30%
    b) independent study with audio-visual materials available in a control place 13%
    c) a series of seminars or minicourses based on particular interest areas 56%

13. Do you feel history should primarily be studied to...

a) offer the student an understanding and knowledge of life in prior times 34%
b) try to relate history to various other disciplines 10%
c) show how history is relevant to today's situation 42%
d) other 12%

14. How would you describe your present grasp of American History?

a) excellent overview plus in-depth understanding of certain important topics 16%
b) good overview but little depth 56%
c) superficial and sketchy knowledge 26%

IV. If we could build courses and minicourses around these topics, how would you rate your interest?

a) extreme
b) moderate
c) slight
d) none

Percentage of Students having:	Interest			
	extreme	moderate	slight	none
15. Puritanism	14	44	31	9
16. Political leaders (biographical approach)	23	42	26	7
17. Political parties	22	32	32	11
18. American Revolution	50	39	8	2
19. Development of government	29	42	23	4
20. Rise of commerce and industry	11	46	33	8
21. Development of foreign policy	34	37	22	6
22. Rise of the military	24	32	30	12
23. Development of education	13	30	40	15
24. Development of transportation	11	26	46	16
25. Religion and philosophy in early America	21	35	26	17
26. Literature and fine arts in early America	25	26	28	21
27. Rise of slavery culminating with the Civil War	44	38	14	3
28. The Westward expansion	30	48	17	4
29. Jacksonian democracy	26	41	25	7
30. British imperial policy (1607-1776)	16	37	30	15

Percentage of Students having:		Interest			
		extreme	moderate	slight	none
31.	The American Indian	53	30	14	1
32.	Immigration	19	37	36	7
33.	Clay, Calhoun, and Webster	18	33	33	4
34.	American Presidency	27	34	30	7
35.	The Marshall Court	16	30	35	18
36.	American newspapers	21	30	36	11
37.	Railroads	9	25	45	18
38.	Architectural styles	11	19	31	37
39.	American agriculture	6	23	45	25
40.	Higher education	11	28	42	18
41.	American political theories	36	28	23	13
42.	Sociological implications of slavery	40	28	24	7
43.	Music in America	21	21	35	21
44.	Art in America	18	25	31	24
45.	Abolitionism	26	37	26	9
46.	Growth of democracy	23	46	23	8
47.	Roots of American radicalism	38	35	19	7
48.	American humanitarian reform (excluding abolitionism)	22	38	25	11
49.	State of local history (study development of small geographical unit through time)	17	28	31	20
50.	Exploration of the New World	17	26	33	19

TABLE 1

AREAS OF MAJOR INTEREST TO STUDENTS*

TOPICS	Percentage** of Students Having	
	Extreme or Moderate Interest	Slight or No Interest
American Revolution	89	10
The American Indian	83	15
Rise of Slavery Culminating with the Civil War	82	17
The Westward Expansion	78	21
Roots of American Radicalism	73	26
Development of Government	71	27
Development of Foreign Policy	71	28
Sociological Implications of Slavery	68	31
Jacksonian Democracy	67	32
Political Leaders (Biographical Approach)	65	33
American Political Theories	64	36
Abolitionism	63	35
American Presidency	61	37
American Newspapers	61	47
American Humanitarian Reform (Excluding Abolitionism)	60	36
Growth of Democracy	59	31
Puritanism	58	40
Rise of Commerce and Industry	57	41
Rise of the Military	56	42
Immigration	56	43
Religion and Philosophy in Early America	56	43
Political Parties	54	43
British Imperial Policy (1708-1776)	53	45
Clay, Calhoun, and Webster	51	47
The Marshall Court	46	52
State or Local History (Study of Small Geographical Unit Through Time)	45	51
Exploration of the New World	43	52
Development of Education	43	55
Art in America	43	56
Music in America	42	56
Higher Education	39	60
Development of Transportation	36	62
Railroads	34	63
Architectural Styles	30	68
American Agriculture	29	70

* This table was compiled from student responses to the question: "If we could build courses and minicourses around these topics, how would you rate your interest?"

**Percentages do not total 100 because some students did not rate all topics and because of error in rounding off figures.

Appendix B

Open-ended Responses to
HISTORY 255
Predevelopment Opinionnaire

Following are four summaries of 60 responses to the open-ended questions of the opinionnaire.

1. What are some of the more important things you expect to learn in this course?

1.	Moderate striking on all aspects; overview		16 responses
2.	Relate past beliefs to present situations	13	
	Puritanism (effects today)	2	
	Civil War (effects today)	2	18 responses
	Origins of principles of our country	1	
3.	Political parties, government		2 responses
4.	Why things happened as they did	1	
	Causes American Revolution	4	
	Causes Civil War	4	11 responses
5.	Nature of slavery, questions involved	2	
6.	American Indian		1 response
7.	Ethnic groups		1 response
8.	Immigration		1 response
9.	The "human" side		5 responses
10.	Diplomacy		1 response
11.	Intellectual history, democratic principles institutional change		3 responses
12.	Not much, nothing		2 responses
13.	Architecture		1 response
14.	Uninterpretable		4 responses

COMMENTS

When asked, "What are some of the most important things you expect to learn in this course?" the bulk of the 60 student responses could be broken down into three (3) categories. First, desire for an understanding of the relationship between past events and beliefs and our present-day history (18). Second, desire for an overview of history which would include "a moderate striking on all aspects" (16). Third, a desire to understand the causes of historical events, or, "why things happened the way they did" (11). Other concerns were with minority groups, the growth of democratic institutions, and the "human" side of history.

2. How do you think the American History course should be structured? (lecture? seminars? independent learning? etc.)

Fifteen said they wanted seminars
Five said they wanted lectures
Eleven wanted combination of lecture and seminars

COMMENTS

About half wanted combinations of all kinds--minicourses, independent learning, guest speakers, research, etc.

The need for choice and variety of approaches seemed to be a strong trend. Many also wanted lecture as a basis or focal experience--but not just lecture.

3. What would "turn you off" in a history course?

1.	Chronological, factual, memorization study (glimpse approach with no depth)	36 responses
2.	Overstressing lectures	10 responses
3.	Long reading assignments	2 responses
4.	Pressure and over-expectation by professor	1 response
5.	Writing term papers	3 responses
6.	Uninterpretable	3 responses
7.	Reading textbooks and old documents	6 responses
8.	Poor T.A.'s	1 response
9.	Puritanism	2 responses
10.	Irrelevant material	2 responses

11.	Dull professor--who does not make the lecture material interesting	8 responses
12.	Large lecture halls	2 responses
13.	Boring discussion sections	3 responses
14.	Listening to so-called informative tapes	1 responses
15.	Poor book selections	3 responses
16.	Overstressing viewpoints	1 response
17.	Inadequate emphasis on a given person or topic	5 responses
18.	Omits	1

COMMENTS

When asked, "What would 'turn you off' in a history course?" the average response of sixty college freshmen was based upon a distinct dislike for the factual, chronological approach with emphasis on memorization and on a dislike of boring lectures by an uninterested professor. The responses exemplify the idea of getting away from the high school broad overview method of teaching American History. Under this survey approach lies a group of specific dislikes such as studying textbooks, reading old documents, and writing term papers. In the area of lectures, there is a large consensus that does not like lectures or lecture halls at all, and a larger consensus that feels that it is essential for the professor to make the lecture material as interesting as possible. Overall, the responses informed me that the high school broad overview approach and lectures, especially uninteresting ones, are the two major areas where students are "turned off."

4. Questionnaires usually do not allow you to mention everything that is a concern to you about a course. Feel free to offer additional comments. Thank you.

1.	Blank 25 responses	25 responses
2.	Current reading assignments too long	3 responses
3.	Current discussion teacher unsatisfactory	1 response
4.	Current course too long on Puritans	4 responses
5.	Cover topics in depth	2 responses
6.	More time for relating topics to today	2 responses
7.	American Indian	2 responses

8.	American dream	1 response
9.	Current--too much stress on fine detail	1 response
10.	Current course healthy diversion	1 response
11.	Wish for factual rather than opinion book	1 response
12.	Dislike big lecture	2 responses
13.	Increase AV and audio tapes--more personal	3 responses
14.	Current--Dr. Sharp is good	2 responses
15.	Current--prefer take home exam	1 response
16.	Current--discussion groups bad	3 responses
17.	Good course	2 responses
18.	Discussions good	3 responses
19.	More independent work	1 response
20.	More student participation	1 response
21.	Seminar studies	1 response
22.	Uninterpretable	2 responses
23.	Dislike current texts	1 response
24.	More data preferred	1 response
25.	Need better correspondence between lecture and readings	1 response
26.	Lecture too close to book	1 response
27.	Fill in transition periods (Puritan-Revolution)	1 response
28.	Lecture section time too long	1 response
29.	One test no papers	1 response
30.	More short papers 1-3 pages	1 response
31.	Prefer independent learning	1 response
32.	Lectures preferred	1 response
33.	Student participation is a myth	1 response

COMMENTS

When given the opportunity to comment on anything that concerned them, the History 255 students commented on their current course and its instructor. It is difficult to see a trend in this. The most notable complaint was that too much time had been spent on the Puritans. Aside from that and the fact that 25 of the 60 in the sample left this question blank, opinion was quite diverse. It demonstrates once again that attempts to please some people will invariably displease others. One man's panacea is another's poison.

Appendix C

Notes on The Predevelopment Questionnaire

Thomas R. Owen

The following four categories of interest were used to rate possible topics in questions 15-50. (Extreme, moderate, slight, none) It seems reasonable to reduce these to two categories, namely, Interest and Lack of Interest. These categories are complementary and mutually exclusive so we need only choose one--the second category being entirely determined by knowing the response to the first.

Pooling the percentages in the extreme and moderate categories, we find that the overall mean is 56.61; that is, on the average 56.61% of the responses are in the interest categories to our topical items. The standard deviation of the percentage of response in this category was 14.81. For a response percentage to be regarded as extreme, it should lie at least 1 standard deviation above or below the mean of the destribution; that is, percentages above 71.42 and below 41.80 might reasonably be regarded as extreme.

Topics in these two categories are:

Interest

Item #		% Interested
18	American Revolution	89
27	Rise of Slavery Culminating in the Civil War	82
28	The Westward Expansion	78
31	The American Indian	83
47	Roots of American Radicalism	73

Lack of Interest

Item #		% Interested
24	Development of Transportation	37
37	Railroads	34
38	Architectural Styles	30
39	American Agriculture	29
40	Higher Education	39

Please remember that even though these 10 items have been identified as in some way "unusual," the remaining 26 items should not be regarded as unimportant because of their "ordinariness." They indicate that, in opting for one extreme or the other, roughly half of the students might be displeased. The concept of the "significant minority" could be employed here.

Particular attention should be given to some of the other questions.

Section I

Question 4

Thirty-six per cent report taking the course for reasons other than an interest in history. How can they be "sold on" or interested in history? Should there be an attempt to seduce them intellectually?

Section II

Question 3

Twenty-three percent see history as slightly or not at all useful. Are they correct? What could be done to show its value? 23% see history as extremely useful. Are they crazy? What kind of approach do they take to history to make them say a thing like that?

Question 5

Fifty-two percent prefer that more than a few topics be covered.

Question 6

Forty percent seem to feel that students would not do a satisfactory job of topic selection.

Question 12

Thirty percent prefer the lecture/discussion section approach. Why? 13%, only, seem to really want total independent study.

Question 13

Thirty-four percent would study history for knowledge of life in prior times. Is this equivalent to preferring a factual--chronological approach?

Forty-two percent want to see its relevance to today's situation? How can this be done? What constitutes "relevance" here?

Overall, I would judge that students want depth in the course, but they do not want to to lose sight of the "big picture." Recall that very few of the suggested topics got really low ratings. None registered less than 30% interest. A recommendation might be that, if the course is structured around selected topics, there should be a very deliberate effort to tie them in with broader concerns--and don't forget the American Indians.